

MINISTER'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

March 2003

1. Background

- At the 12 November 2002 Forum meeting a briefing note was tabled on natural resource management (NRM). The note outlined the State Government's progress to implement a policy on Natural Resource Management which seeks to integrate NRM by reforming the current institutional structures.
- The State Government released for public comment a discussion paper entitled 'New Directions for Integrated Natural Resource Management in SA', that outlined the Government's preferred position on:
 - institutional and structural arrangements and relationships;
 - funding mechanisms;
 - planning and decision-making processes; and
 - regional boundaries.
- During the NRM Discussion Paper consultation period Local Government raised a number of issues and concerns including the collection of the proposed NRM levy by councils.
- A joint LGA/State Government working party was established at the initiative of the LGA to ensure objective consideration was given to the collection options for the proposed NRM levy.
- The working party's report to the President, Local Government Association, the Minister for Environment and Heritage, and the Minister for Local Government discusses issues relating to possible collection options for the proposed NRM levy including the administrative efficiencies of the existing determination and collection arrangements for the current water catchment levy under the Water Resources Act 1997. The issue of collection of the Emergency Services Levy, currently collected by Revenue SA, is also flagged.
- The collection of State wide levies was raised by the LGA in its submission with the State Government for consideration as part of the preparation of the 2003-2004 State budget. Whilst the immediate issue for consideration by the Forum is the collection of the proposed NRM levy there is a clear link to the Emergency Services levy given the two are state wide and

some in Local Government have adopted the view that from a community (efficiency) perspective only one collection system should apply.

- There is a divergence of views within Local Government as to whether the State Government or Councils should be responsible for the collection of levies.
- Current LGA policy is that Local Government should not be required to levy or collect revenues on behalf of other spheres of government unless such arrangements are acceptable to Local Government.
- The issue is to be discussed at the LGA's General Meeting on 7 March 2003 to consider what approach the LGA should take in this area. A forum will be held earlier that day to enable questions and discussion of the pros and cons to be considered in advance of the formal consideration of this matter at the General Meeting.

2. Forum discussion:

- **Minister Hill is meeting with the LGA President on 5 March 2003. A verbal update can be provided to the Forum on the outcomes of this meeting.**
- Minister Hill to outline to the Forum the State's response to the various issues and concerns raised by Local Government in responding to the Discussion Paper and the proposed timing for the introduction of the Bill into Parliament and the consultation process with key stakeholders.
- LGA to report on the findings of the joint working party investigating the NRM levy collection issue.
- LGA to report on the views presented by its members at the LGA General Meeting on the findings identified in the working party's paper and the outcome of any resolutions made by its members.
- Forum members to discuss and provide advice on a preferred approach to resolution that would, as far as possible, meet the objectives of the parties. Discussion could include the desirability of the matter being elevated to become a formal referral to the Forum.

3. Next Steps

- This is subject to the outcome of the Minister Hill/LGA President meeting and the discussions of the Forum. This topic is to remain on the Forum agenda given the various issues that need to be progressed between State and Local Government.